

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Courtney Brown
(707) 961-6303

Whale Watching at its Best: March 5, 6, 19, 20

State Parks Will Be Center Stage For Annual Mendocino Whale Festivals

FORT BRAGG – Five state parks in the Mendocino-Fort Bragg area offer some of the best whale watching each year.

This year will be no different when thousands of people are expected to visit for the 23rd Annual Mendocino Coast Whale Festivals, which take place over two weekends in March.

The Mendocino Whale Festival will be held March 5 and 6 and will offer arts and crafts shows, plein air (in the open air) painting, wine tasting and a chowder cook-off, as well as whale watching in surrounding state parks.

Two weeks later, the Fort Bragg Whale Festival, March 19 and 20, will showcase a classic car show, microbrewery beer tasting, chowder cook-off and an arts and crafts show. Point Cabrillo Light Station State Park, located between Mendocino and Fort Bragg, will hold family-oriented activities, including a whale walk/run.

Here's more on local parks, great viewing spots and activities:

One of the most unique parks is the **Mendocino Headlands State Park**, which takes its name from the historic Mendocino Village atop its bluffs. This State Park encompasses the Village and the Big River, where river meets ocean to create an ideal recreation area for kayaking, hiking, and relaxing. The Mendocino Headlands State Park also includes the Ford House, an historic home and visitor center that offers whale walks during the annual Festival.

North of Mendocino is **Russian Gulch State Park**, where unparalleled ocean views from hilltop bluffs allow great whale watching, as well as camping and a hike to a natural waterfall.

Just north of Russian Gulch is the 300 acre **Point Cabrillo Light Station and Nature Preserve**, a fully restored, 1909 lighthouse with the original Fresnel lens still used for navigation. Point Cabrillo Light Station offers one of the finest views of the whale migration plus

an indoor aquarium where visitors can learn about the abundant marine life along California's rocky shore. There's also a gift shop full of artwork and books on whales and lighthouses, and naturalists will be available both weekends during the Annual Whale Festival with displays and activities for the whole family.

Continuing north to the **Jughandle State Reserve**, visitors can watch the gray whales or climb the Ecological Staircase, where a complete record of ecological succession can be seen on one hike.

Three miles north of the city of Fort Bragg is **MacKerricher State Park**, a gem among the Mendocino Coast State Parks. MacKerricher offers a boardwalk showcasing a wide ocean vista with a seal and whale watching station that brings visitors close to the natural beauty of the Pacific. Miles of shoreline and secluded beaches are available for strolling past northern California's pristine sand dunes. From Laguna Point, where the whale migration can be observed, MacKerricher park docents offer guided whale walks and other activities during the Festivals.

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